

# SIS MATTERS

2024



## PRINCIPAL GREETING

Welcome to the April 2024 edition of SIS Matters.

A special welcome to our 15 new families who joined our school on April 01. We trust your first week in our classes was a wonderful start to your time here at SIS.

One of our ongoing goals for this school year is to continue to build our positive school culture and with this in mind I begin today by passing along a compliment to our wonderful students. On a recent school tour, a guest at our school commented on our SIS students' welcoming nature and on the quality of their uniform. They felt the students were positive and happy and wearing their uniform so well compared to other schools they had visited. As Principal, I took this as a point of pride. Our school does indeed wish to be welcoming and respectful of others. More on this notion - our anti-bullying committee joins our parent community in continuing initiatives to counter bullying. Our students and staff have begun to engage in anti-bullying Focus Group discussions, and our Parent Council has scheduled an Anti-bullying Round Table discussion for April 24. All are welcome to this discussion to talk about the reality of bullying and how parents and school can best work together to stop bullying. All of this effort will help inform our school Anti-bullying Programme which has to be a concerted school wide effort to be effective.

We are also scheduling in May a Town Hall Meeting for all to both share developments and discuss ongoing priorities at SIS. We hope to see you there - date to be announced soon.

As the following pages will reveal, the first term of the school year was a busy and exciting one here at Sunway International School, Iskandar Puteri. In addition to finding updates and showcases from:



- Our Elementary Classes,
- Yearbook Committee
- Chinese New Year Committee
- Student Council
- Library
- Sports
- Carnival Open Day
- Secondary Student Center
- a visit from 80+ Japanese students,
- And more.

Please enjoy the contributions from Ms. Kim who shares our school's position on the important topic of homework and also touches on some best understandings for our students who are carrying those heavy backpacks from home to school and back again. These are important topics raised by students, parents and teachers and are meant as conversation starters for us. Additionally, Mr Ethan weighs in on the power of student 'choice' in the MYP classroom. Regardless of your child's age, I encourage everyone to read this article reflecting the importance of student agency and empowerment here at SIS.

Our Hari Raya Puasa Holiday is upon us already and with this in mind we wish great joy to our Muslim families. May Hari Raya bring you cheer all year! Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri!

Warm regards,  
**Bill Ironside, Principal, and**  
**Kim Percy, Deputy Principal**



## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UPDATES

Dear Parents,

As we step into a new term, I want to pause and reflect on the wonderful journey SISJ elementary community shared during term 1.

Our focus on kindness during February was truly heartwarming, with students expressing acts of kindness, both big and small, which reinforced the importance of creating empathy and compassion within our community. Your support in instilling these values at home played a significant role in the success of our Kindness month.

As we move forward, it's important to note that our dedication to creating a safe and inclusive environment through our anti-bullying initiatives remains our focus. We are committed to making anti-bullying a continuous focus, not just for a month of learning. Together, we will continue to guide our students to stand up against bullying and cultivate a culture of respect and understanding.

The initial months of the school year are crucial for establishing personal connections with each student. I am very proud of our teachers for their dedication and commitment to student well-being. Whether it's through the creation of meaningful connections, conducting assessments, or providing feedback, their ability to address the holistic needs of every student reinforces our belief that each child deserves customized support and opportunities to excel academically and socially.

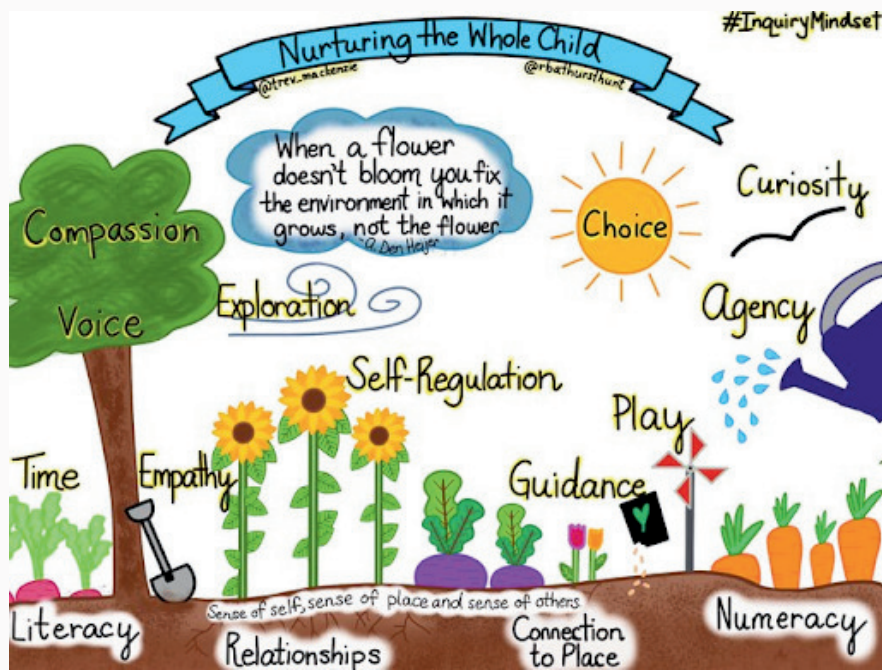
The reintroduction of phonics groups for explicit instruction, along with enhancements to our ELA support program, is aimed at nurturing individual literacy skills. These initiatives are designed to support all students in reaching their potential as confident readers and effective communicators.

Our hands-on learning experiences continue to spark curiosity and creativity. From molding clay pots to exploring the intricacies of lung structures, these inquiry based activities offer invaluable opportunities for exploration and discovery.

Looking ahead into term 2, let's carry forward the essence of kindness, inclusivity, and academic growth.

Warm regards,

**Sarah-Leigh Keddy**  
Elementary Coordinator



## CHOICE IN THE MYP CLASSROOM

When entering the MYP classroom, both explicit and implicit elements are present. The explicit elements are things like posted instructions, today's date, student work, and probably some abandoned pens. But the MYP classroom has a lot more happening that someone may not immediately see.

At its core (see the program model below) the MYP centers the learner profile, concepts, context, and skills evenly distributed across the subjects. In our classrooms, our activities and learning experiences will look a lot more like the illustration above. MYP Classes focus on inquiry where students grow their sense of self, sense of place, and sense of others.



In the MYP classrooms at SISJ, students are given guidance, agency, and time to blossom into self-regulators who can explore their curiosity, and develop compassion for self and others and their own voice over time. To get to any of this, students must have freedom of choice. This choice is a powerful factor in ensuring that we create highly skilled and empathetic students. Students exercise their choice in a variety of ways, for example, choosing their summative assessment product; choosing their own learning and development goals; or choosing their sources when researching a topic. Some more challenging choices

are students choosing how they manage their time in learning experiences or how they respond to feedback. Some of the toughest choices include how students bounce back from adversity such as failures and mistakes or how students manage positive self-talk.

All these choices in the classroom foster autonomy, responsibility, and engagement. Empowering students to make decisions about their learning path nurtures critical thinking, creativity, and their growth. When we champion student choice, we are cultivating well-rounded individuals who are prepared to confidently and purposefully navigate the complexities of the world.





As educators, we constantly strive to strike a balance between academic rigor and the well-being of our students, with homework long being an integral part of this discussion. Those who support homework argue for its benefits of reinforcing learning, building connections between school and home and developing study habits and time management skills. Those who oppose, argue that homework does not raise achievement levels in

proportion to time spent by students. Homework also tends to be done to excess thus overloading students to the point of having a negative impact on their academic achievement as well as being detrimental to their social/emotional development and wellbeing.

A large body of research, on the other hand, argues for a middle-of-the-road approach, a Goldilocks zone if you will, where there is not too much homework nor too little, but just the right amount to support a child's overall academic growth along with their social/emotional development.

But where is the Goldilocks Zone? The National Education Association in the USA (2018) recommends that homework time is calculated based on a maximum of 10 minutes per grade level per night. This means a student in Grade 6 should have no more than 60 minutes of homework each school night while a Grade 9 student should have no more than 90 minutes of homework each night. In support of this, a study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2014, found that "after around four hours of homework per week, the additional time invested in homework has a negligible impact on performance;" A 2013 study by Galloway, Conner, and Pope found that excessive homework can lead to increased stress, sleep deprivation, reduced engagement in learning, and even physical health issues. When it comes to our Kindergarten to Grade 5 students, research has shown that students in these grades gain little to no benefit from homework, and that too much homework can have a negative impact on the students. (Cooper, 2008) The recommendation for Elementary is to spend time at home reading, especially with parents, as confidence in reading is a major indicator of future academic success. (Fiester, 2013)

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So how has all of this information informed our homework policy? Here at SISJ, our homework policy follows the NEA guidelines and provides our Grade 6 and 7 students with approximately 60 minutes of homework each school night, Grade 8 up to 70 minutes each school night, Grade 9 up to 80 minutes and Grade 10 up to 90 minutes. We acknowledge that every child has their own Goldilocks Zone and that the time it takes one student to complete a piece of homework is not necessarily the same as another student; however, we aim to keep the average time as close to the recommended guidelines as possible. We also acknowledge that in order to support students developing time management skills, they need to have a choice of when to complete different pieces of homework in line with their after-school commitments, and therefore the day-to-day homework time may vary.

Research has shown that students in Kindergarten to Grade 5, gain little to no benefit from homework, and that too much can have a negative impact on students.

It is crucial for all of us to recognize that students' social and emotional development is as important as their academic progress, and even plays a role in determining a student's academic success. Balancing homework with extracurricular activities, family time, and relaxation is essential for fostering well-rounded individuals. By understanding the drawbacks of excessive homework and advocating for a balanced approach that prioritizes students' holistic development, we can create a more supportive and effective learning environment for all of our students. Let us work together to ensure that our students thrive academically while also nurturing their social and emotional well-being.





At SISJ, we prioritize our children's health along with their academic success. And as such, we want to address some aspects of the ongoing concern over the weight that some of our students are carrying in their backpacks.

We encourage all our MYP & DP/CP students to use their lockers to hold their books when they are not needed for class; only carry the necessary books and supplies to each class. Going home, please take only the necessary items and leave any textbooks, copybooks or other items safely locked in your lockers. Please, where appropriate, take images of your homework assignments so that your backpack is not loaded down with unnecessary books.

Together, we can work to lighten the load.

## STUDENT SERVICES CENTRE

Antibullying week was held from 26th February to 1st of March. From engaging classroom activities to a dance-off, morning quizzes, live music to the Pink Shirt Day assemblies, there was never a dull moment. We were happy to see students, staff, and parents proudly wearing their pink shirts in solidarity against bullying during our Pink Shirt day assembly.

It was a privilege to have Ms. Manjari, a clinical psychologist, join us to address our secondary students, emphasizing the importance of tackling bullying in a thoughtful and professional manner. The following week, we welcomed Ms. Manjari back to speak to our parents during the Morning Coffee session held on the 13th March.

Our commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment extends far beyond a single week. This is just the beginning. Ongoing initiatives include a focus group study, Odd Sock Day and more. Together, let's continue to stand up against bullying and promote kindness and respect throughout the year.





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## LIBRARY UPDATE

Early at the start of the year, students have been exposed to the do's and don'ts in the library. They're doing great, being responsible and respecting others when coming here. We love to see our children enjoying reading during weekly library sessions. Thank you to Grade 10 students (Zhee Kheng, Kyoka & Anahita) for helping with story telling sessions for JK students. They enjoyed the stories and we hope you learn something as part of your SAA subject. Lower elementary students love story telling and always look forward to their next library session.

The library has planned many activities for the upcoming Spring into Reading month. The theme this year is almost everyone's favourite...Harry Potter!!! Please enjoy the contests and activities and there will be prizes for winners!

"When in doubt, go to the library" – Harry Potter

SISJ Library (Ms. Afizah & Ms. Akilah)

## OPEN DAY

SISJ's Open Day Carnival was a hit! Organized by Grades 6 to 10 students and supported by teachers, it was a blast celebrating talents and community. There were games, crafts, and delicious food for everyone to enjoy. We also nailed our blood donation drive and teamed up with Gleneagles Medini Johor for even more community support. Additionally, the RM6750 profit generated will benefit Pusat Kebajikan Shan De Orphanage and SK Sungai Danga, further contributing to the community's welfare. Thank you all for your invaluable participation and contributions.







## OTANI JUNIOR HIGH

March was a thrilling month for many reasons, but the main highlight was receiving a visit from 82 students and eight teachers from Otani Junior High located in Kyoto, Japan. We welcomed the visitors with open arms and SISJ students and teachers put their best feet forward in showing a day-in-the-life at SISJ. Our guests got to try inquiry-based learning in the grades 8-10 classes and taste chicken rice. The chicken rice seemed particularly popular as the buffet was wiped clean of food. Students bonded and made important connections that are key to international mindedness and global thinking. As an international school, we often work within our own SISJ community to develop our global connections, but we also need to remember that there is a giant world outside our gates.



Having a visit from our Otani peers has galvanized our interest to explore international mindedness farther afield. We are both thankful and grateful for the experience to start making connections. We hope that we may meet our Otani friends again. As we consider how we might reunite with our newfound peers, the question remains when and where? In keeping with international mindedness and the spirit of global connections, perhaps the next time we meet SISJ will be the guests and Otani our hosts.





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## STUDENT COUNCIL

Student Council has been abuzz with so many events happening in the previous year, for instance, Halloween Night, a Dodgeball tournament, which included staff and students, and Christmas week, with the help of Parent Council, we came together to create an excitement before the Christmas holidays. The Student Council was dressed up as Santa and his little elves, to hand out candy to all the kids on the Nice List, which happened to be all Sunway students.

In 2024, we started off the year with spreading some love in the form of Valentine's Day roses and chocolates going on sale for the students, to continue to spread the love. We stood up against Bullying and wore pink to show our support saying, "That WE Are Walking Away and It's Okay." With our focus on continuing to bring creative and interesting events to the students, we have a few events lined up till June. Starting off with Teacher Appreciation Day, which again we will be working closely with the Parent Council to make this event a success, and show how much we appreciate our teachers. Our month of May being a busy one with the eagerly awaited talent show, being in the middle of the month, to showcase some of the ECA's and students performances from throughout the ages, an event not to be missed.



2024 keeps getting bigger and better, with the addition of 3 NEW positions to the Student Council, to represent the growth within our school, and to keep students updated and informed of all that is happening around them. The 3 new positions are listed below:

- Creative and Social Media: Take pictures at events, create posters, advertise events, morning announcements, website posts and help with decorations with each event.
- Sports: Advertise sports events, educate students on sportsmanship, celebrate student achievements, etc.
- Wellness and student affairs: Create awareness around mental health, encourage neurological and cultural differences, create a buddy system, educate on healthy eating, etc.

We hope that by encouraging more students to be a part of the Student Council, we can continue to grow our school body and make students more informed, as well as create a vibe around school that this is the school to be at.



## JSAC AQUATHLON

On the 26th of February, a Monday, we were thrilled to have 14 valiant students from SISJ participate in the JSAC Aquathlon Competition held at Shattuck St. Mary International School. Our athletes showcased their prowess by participating in almost all categories, excluding U7 and U18. Their performances were remarkable and they completed the race with admirable determination.

We take immense pride in sharing that four of our athletes were included amongst the top five contenders in their specific categories:

- Chye Shinyun from G6B emerged victorious, clinching the first position in the Under 11 Boys Category.
- Ethan Low from G7B displayed remarkable skill and secured the second runner up position in the Under 11 Boys Category.
- Kim JiSoo from G7B ranked fifth in the Under 11 Girls Category, showing great potential.
- Soshi Shuto from G5B achieved an impressive fifth position in the Under 9 Boys Category.

Besides these individual achievements, our team was noted and praised for their embodiment of true sportsmanship and camaraderie. Their resilience and determination were evident to all spectators. We wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the parents for their unwavering support and constant encouragement.

In spite of the demanding nature of the Aquathlon, our students showcased immense perseverance and spirit. We are extremely proud of all the participants who represented SISJ with honor and pride. Their hard work and dedication have certainly borne fruit, and we eagerly anticipate their future accomplishments. Continue swimming, continue running, and continue making us proud!

Your achievements bear witness to your dedication and commitment. We are eager to see what the future has in store for our athletic stars. A hearty congratulations once again to all our participants and medalists!

NAME	GRADE	CATEGORY	Position
Ryo Miyashita	2A	MAG Open Age	4th
Shuto Fuka	2A	WAG Introduction U7	5th
Ananya Kyra Avinesh	2A	WAG Introduction U7	12th
Li Emerson Wei	3B	WAG Beginner U9	8th
Chiew Yi Tong	3B	WAG Beginner U9	1st
Ann Miyashita	4A	WAG Beginner U9	13th
Li Ava Xuan	5B	WAG Beginner U11	11th
Shuto Soshi	5B	MAG Open Age	2nd
Maryam Bajrai Abidullah	6A	WAG Novice U11	2nd
Naomi Phang Wenyi	9A	WAG Advance Open Age	2nd

## JSAC GYMNASTICS

Our incredible student representatives from various classes showcased sheer talent and determination at the JSAC Gymnastics Competition held on Tuesday, **5th March at Marlborough College.**

Their performances were nothing short of spectacular, demonstrating unwavering perseverance and bravery throughout every routine! Keep soaring high and inspiring us!



# CELEBRATING CHINESE NEW YEAR IN SISJ

We are thrilled to share with you the highlights of Chinese New Year celebration at Sunway International School, where we honored the remarkable performances of our students in various activities and during the Chinese New Year celebration assembly. These activities and assembly, held at the end of January and on February 7th respectively, were filled with cultural immersion, joy, and pride.

## Chinese New Year activities



### MYP Competition

The MYP students found their hand-eye coordination put to the test with the chopstick challenge: utilising their chopstick-handling skills to pick up beans of varying sizes. For quite a few students, there was a bean that got away!

### Chinese New Year Stage Decoration

MYP students from Grade 9 and 10 explored the cultural symbolism of Chinese New Year and applied paper craft techniques to design the stage in the SISJ Multi-Purpose Hall. Embracing the spirit of togetherness, they demonstrated teamwork that extends beyond culture or ethnicity.



## Celebration Assembly (7th February)

Our Celebration Assembly was a testament to the hard work, dedication, and achievements of our students. It was a moment of pride and inspiration for the entire school community. Here are some highlights from the event:

### Opening Ceremony - Painting the eyes of the dragon

Before the performances began, we had a wonderful opening ceremony. Our Principal, Mr. Bill, and Ms. Kim were invited to paint the dragon's eyes, symbolizing our wish for everyone to shine in the new year.



*Dragon was drawn by  
Lua Zee Kheng(Grade 10)*





Liu Zi Han (Grade 10) & Chen Guan Fei (Grade 12)

### **Traditional Chinese Dance**

Our students took the initiative to showcase their talents in traditional Chinese dance, starting off the celebrations with a brief foray into classical cultural performances.

### **Class performances from primary and secondary**

The traditional was succeeded by the modern. The following acts featured several inspiring class performances by both primary and secondary students, displaying their collaboration and dedication. Together, they delivered a dynamic and coordinated performance, reflecting the cooperative spirit of our school students.



Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 7



### **Skit**

Grade 8 and 9 students worked together to perform and record a skit featuring the 12 Chinese zodiacs. They showcased creative interpretations of each zodiac sign in the video, bringing to the audience a performance full of vitality and imagination.

As we reflect on these special events, we are filled with gratitude for the opportunity to come together as a school community and celebrate both our cultural heritage and our students' achievements. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all parents for their support, which made these events truly memorable. May the spirit of Chinese New Year and the achievements of our students continue to inspire us throughout the year.





## ☀️ **Unlock the Chapters** **of Our Journey:** **The 2023 Yearbook Teaser!** ☀️

As we bid farewell to an extraordinary academic chapter, the 2023 Yearbook beckons, promising a captivating exploration of our collective experiences. This year's theme, a carefully chosen tapestry, weaves together the triumphs, dreams, and shared moments that define us. From academic achievements to sports victories, the yearbook reflects the brilliance of our diverse community. Vivid descriptions and captivating imagery bring each page to life, allowing us to visualize, relive, and rejoice in the energy of our most cherished memories. A tantalizing glimpse into future sections, celebrating friendships, achievements, and unity, leaves us eagerly anticipating the unveiling. The 2023 Yearbook isn't just a collection of moments; it's a living testament to our shared legacy—Your Story, Our Story.

#YearbookTeaser #Classof2023  
 #MemoriesInTheMaking

**Ms. Malinda Musa**  
 2023 Yearbook Committee





## Congratulations to Our 2024 Scholarship Recipients



**MARIAH MOKHTAR**  
IBDP ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP



**JASSLYN DESHARTHAN**  
IBDP ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP



**TAN ZAN XI**  
IBDP ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP



**RUAN ZIHAN**  
IBDP ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP



**HWANG SEONGBIN**  
IBDP ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP



**CHONG YIH YEE**  
MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP



**CHONG YANG YANG**  
SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP



**KUAN JING XUEN**  
MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP



**LIM WEI CHEN**  
MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### APRIL

- 10 – Hari Raya Puasa
- 15 to 26 – Spring Into Reading
- 24 – Parent Coffee Morning
- 26 – Hari Raya Assembly

### MAY

- 01 – Labour Day
- 22 – Wesak Day
- 23 and 24 – Mental Health Day
- 24 – Elementary Playday

### JUNE

- 03 – King's Birthday
- 10 – Semester 1 Final Report
- 12 – Student-Led Conference



SPRING INTO READING is starting on Monday, April 15.

Please make sure that you bring to school a book to read as we will be having reading time throughout the 2-weeks.